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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 002893

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SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU: RETURN OF THE RED HAT CREATES BROAD CONCERN

REF: 05 DAKAR 1703

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Former President Kumba Yala, widely described as &crazy,8 is creating unease in Bissau as he takes the reigns of the second largest party in the National Popular Assembly (ANP), the Party for Social Renewal (PRS). There is talk by the largest opposition party, the Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), of colluding with the PRS to hold a no confidence vote in the Government, based in part on meager donor pledges. Meanwhile, the ANP prepares to debate amnesty for military crimes, which would include the 2004 murder of then Armed Forces Chief Seabra. There is no budget for the new fiscal year which starts next month, and the GOGB is still looking for ways to cover the financing gap. END SUMMARY.

KUMBA,S PARTY DIVIDED

¶2. (C) Former President Kumba Yala returned from self-imposed exile in Morocco, still wearing his trademark red hat, and was elected head of the PRS at its November 8-12 Congress in Bissau. The results are being challenged in court by three of the losing candidates, reflecting deep divisions within the party. The legal challenge will not likely undo Yala,s election in which he received some 70 percent of the vote, mostly from Balanta youth among whom he remains extremely popular. Yala has since returned to Morocco and even those closest to him in the PRS do not know when he will return. In private, Certorio Biote, one of the PRS leaders close to Yala and newly appointed President of the Supreme Accounting Court told PolOff he hoped Yala stays away until the next presidential election scheduled for 2010 because his presence is destabilizing for the country. He, like most others PolOff spoke with, described Yala as erratic, populist, and a little crazy.

¶3. (C) IMET graduate Colonel Joao Antonio Gomes, Deputy Inspector of Army Forces, echoed Biote,s comments and went further. &All of us are worried,8 he said of the army in regard to Kumba Yala,s return. The concern is not of armed insurrection but of the future of Guinea-Bissau should Yala be re-elected in the next presidential race. He said the best thing the international community can do for the stability of the country is prevent Yala from returning to

power.

¶4. (U) Upon his arrival in Bissau, Yala called the government of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes illegitimate and called for new legislative elections. He cited a previously secret agreement signed in Dakar in June 2005 between him and

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then presidential candidate Joao Bernardo &Nino8 Vieira in the presence of the African Union (Reftel). In that agreement, Yala agreed to support Vieira as a presidential candidate after Yala failed to qualify for the second round of voting. In exchange, Vieira would appoint certain Yala supporters to governmental posts. According to the PRS, the only appointment Vieira honored from the agreement was Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Batista Tagme Na Waie. Since Yala made the agreement public last month, Vieira has made some shuffles including replacing Interior Minister Ernesto Carvalho with former Justice Minister under Yala, Dionisio Kabi of the PRS. Carvalho was also in the PRS but not a militant. Biote, who was a member of the National Popular Assembly (ANP) and recent IVP participant, was appointed as part of this reshuffle. Rumors are circulating in Bissau about who may be next to go.

¶5. (C) Vieira,s actions are in part an attempt to stave off a no confidence vote in the ANP, which is in session until December 22. The largest opposition party, the PAIGC, has made public overtures to the PRS to join forces and vote out the Gomes government. One wing of the PRS is in favor of that option, but another wing prefers to consolidate its resources to make a strong showing in the next scheduled elections. Vieira faced a similar challenge getting his policy program approved by the same assembly in February and succeeded with the help of backroom deals and alleged vote

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buying.

AMNESTY NATIONAL

¶6. (U) The most important and contentious legislation before the ANP this session is a general amnesty for all military crimes committed from 1980 through 2004 including the assassination of then Armed Forces Chief of Staff Verissimo Correia Seabra. Since the session opened on November 27, Vieira, Gomes and Tagme have spoken out in favor of amnesty as a means of creating stability and moving forward with security sector reform. Tagme, who assumed his current position after Seabra,s murder, said Guinea-Bissau faced &interethnic war8 if people could not forgive each other. Yala and Tagme are thought by many to have at least some level of knowledge or complicity in the Seabra murder.

¶7. (U) The International Commission of Transitional Justice (ICTJ) visited Bissau at the invitation of UNOGBIS (the UN transition office) to help the GOGB address crimes committed during wartime. UNOGBIS Political Officer Linda De Souza noted that Guinea-Bissau has a relatively small reconciliation to address compared to other countries like Angola and Mozambique, but still the GOGB has not pursued ICTJ support.

NEW FISCAL YEAR WILL START WITHOUT BUDGET

¶8. (U) Conspicuously missing from the ANP agenda is the FY 2007 budget which goes into effect January 1. The Government pulled it from consideration, raising concerns that it had not yet received pledges of support to close the budget gap since the donor,s conference last month.

¶9. (C) Special Assistant to the Foreign Minister Domingos Semedo told PolOff that the U.S. &gave nothing8 to Guinea-Bissau at the donor,s round table despite the announcement of over USD 3 million in program support in the coming year. He also said the announcement made at the round

table that the U.S. is re-opening its embassy in Bissau in a process which may take approximately three to five years did not help the Government at all. The GOGB, he said, needed U.S. permanent presence immediately to show the world that it is a viable, stable country. He asked that the USG reconsider its offer and PolOff replied that no new pledges could be made as budgets have been set.

¶10. (U) Semedo expressed the Foreign Minister,s continued interest in signing the Tri-partite agreement between Guinea-Bissau, the United States, and Brazil. In a signal the Government is starting to respond to criticisms of overspending on international travel, he said a signing ceremony in Dakar or Bissau would be preferable to the previously discussed signing in Washington.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Uneasiness over the future of the country is almost palpable in Bissau since Yala,s return, even in his own party. The poor showing at the donor,s conference has weakened the Government in the eyes of opposition parties and the general population. At stake is a year,s worth of hard work which produced a poverty reduction plan, security sector reform plan, and policy program not to mention tens of millions of U.S. dollars in pledges by donors for budgetary support. Vieira is likely working hard behind closed doors with PAIGC and PRS leadership to cut deals to keep the Government running. If successful, there will probably be more staff and budget changes, possibly including the Prime Minister. END COMMENT.

¶12. (U) Visit Mission Dakar's classified website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.
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